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TAGS: PREL PGOV EUN BU

SUBJECT: BULGARIA'S IN GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE GAERC'S AGENDA

REF: A. STATE 151189

1B. STATE 150777

1C. SOFIA 1301

Classified By: A/DCM BRAD FREDEN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (C) Summary: Bulgaria has long supported including the Western Balkans into EU and NATO. On Congo and Sudan, the GOB supports international involvement but will not be able to contribute because of its commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bulgaria hopes GAERC will produce a common EU position on the UNIFIL mandate and EU energy security. Iran is best dealt with through concerted international pressure to end the nuclear program. End Summary.

12. (U) Ognyan Champoев, MFA's Head of Coordination and Planning Sector (S/P equivalent) responded to reftel points on September 14.

13. (C) Western Balkans: Champoев said that Bulgaria has long supported democratization of the region and its eventual entry into the EU and NATO. The fact that Bulgaria hosted the Kosovo Contact Group shows its commitment to completing the status process, he said. On Bosnia and Serbia, he agreed that in order to move forward both countries have to fulfill their international obligations and retain territorial integrity. Not surprisingly, Champoев was more guarded in his responses than was FM Kalfin in his Sept. 12 meeting with EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo (ref. C).

14. (C) Sudan/Congo: While Bulgaria fully supports international involvement in both countries, Champoев doubted it would be able to contribute troops or finances. He cited GOB's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq and its commitment to send troops to Lebanon to show that the country's limited resources were already stretched thin. He hoped GAERC will produce a common EU position on the issue, with the wealthier EU nations taking the lead.

15. (C) Lebanon: Champoев agreed with our points on UNSCR 1701, saying that it is especially important to stop arms traffic through the Syrian border. Bulgaria is not expecting a quick resolution -- "the Middle East is a complicated region that requires a complex approach." Bulgaria looks for a common EU position on the mandate and strategy of the UNIFIL peace-keeping force.

16. (C) Iraq: Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin plans to attend the UNGA Compact Briefing on September 18. The GOB is working on establishing high-level exchanges with Iraq, though the security situation in Baghdad remains a concern. Separately, the Director of the Middle East department told us that Bulgaria is moving ahead with plans to reopen its embassy.

17. (C) Ukraine: According to Champoev, the GOB sees encouraging signs in Ukraine's democratization process.

Bulgaria shares Ukraine's energy security woes, he said, and has been promoting the idea of developing a common EU policy on energy security and diversification. To GOB's disappointment, the larger EU states want to keep energy purely a national policy.

¶8. (C) Iran: Champiev expected a unified statement from the EU Ministers condemning Iran's nuclear ambitions and said Bulgaria fully supports a concerted effort from the international community to pressure Iran into compliance.

KARAGIANNIS